Film

Queer and here to stay

Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival turns five

By Noel Black

Queer culture seems to come farther out of the closet every year. The love that once dared not speak its name is now as ubiquitous as Pamela Anderson's cleavage, and it isn't satisfied with campy supporting roles in sitcoms. Since this time last year, same-sex couples have fought for the right to legally marry in a handful of cities and states across the United States. Not since the civil rights movement of the 1960s has America seen such a groundswell of grass-roots organizing around the issue of equal rights for minorities.

But along with the massive push for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) civil rights has come an equally determined backlash from conservatives who believe that allowing gays to marry will threaten the institution of marriage. Just as soon as gays began to celebrate their fight for the right marry in Massachusetts and San Francisco, President Bush announced in February that he would back a constitutional amendment proposed by Colorado Rep. Marilyn Musgrave to permanently ban gay marriage in the United States. Though such an amendment faces a long uphill battle, the battle lines have been clearly drawn.

As with any political fight, much of the coming struggle will continue to be fought on the frontlines of culture: on the news and in books, music, TV shows and movies. For the GLBT community, film festivals have long been a primary way for queer filmmakers to circumvent the homophobia of Hollywood. Since 1976, the San Francisco International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival has played a seminal role in bringing visibility and legitimacy to gay themes and issues that might otherwise languish in the closet.

Five years ago, local activist and film buff Alma Cremonesi decided to bring some of the best GLBT films from festivals like the one in San Francisco to audiences in Colorado Springs, and the first annual Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival was born.

Now, after several years of financial uncertainty and wavering community support, Cremonesi is thrilled that the PPLFF is still here.

"I wake up every morning just astounded that we made it this far," she said. "I'm rather thrilled about it."

Originally, Cremonesi had envisioned the festival as a gathering that would likely serve the Colorado Springs queer community exclusively. But much to her surprise, the festival has experienced much broader support.

"The purpose of the festival has evolved somewhat over the years," she said, "When we started, we saw it as an LGBT event that would educate us and validate us. As time went on, it became more of a community event. Thankfully, friends of the LGBT community began to show their support. It became clear that the gay and lesbian community could not solely support it. So it's really evolved into this wonderful community event."

Though the PPLFF nearly collapsed two years ago due to flagging ticket sales, Cremonesi says that she and other organizers have fine-tuned the program to a sustainable number of films that represents the diversity that audiences want.

"It's just the right size now," she said. "I think we've settled on nine features and nine shorts. We're able to add more diversity to the program by adding less-popular but more-esoteric films that more esoteric people in our community would like."

She also believes that the importance of civil rights issues facing the GLBT community right now will draw people together around this weekend-long event in a town that is now world-renowned as the home of Focus on the Family, which strongly opposes gay rights and same-sex marriage.

"The other thing that's happened over the past five years is that the festival has become a voice, a counter voice to Focus on the Family," Cremonesi said. "And I think that's very important for the city of Colorado Springs. It's important that Colorado Springs isn't presented as a monolith to the world — that it has gays and lesbians living here and that it's open to our friends."

True to the spirit of openness and diversity, this year's selection of films touches on issues including same-sex marriage, sex and aging, role-playing urban dykes and much more.

Callas Forever, *showing Sunday at 2:30 p.m.*

Mango Kiss, *showing Saturday at 7:15 p.m.*

Reviews

Goldfish Memory

Directed by Liz Gil

Wolfe

Ireland

Somewhere between *Sex and the City* and Robert Altman's *Short Cuts*, this look at the ups and downs of metrosexual love in Dublin is entertaining if not, at times, giddily sentimental. Lecherous professor Tom (Sean Campion) spins the first thread of an elaborate romantic web when he cheats on student Clara (Fiona O'Shuaghnessy) with another student, Isolde (Fiona Glascott). Clara decides men are so five minutes ago and shacks up with news reporter Angie (Flora Montgomery). Angie's best friend is Red (Keith McErlean), a young gay bicycle messenger whose bike accidentally gets locked up by David, the bartender at the café where all the characters seem to cross stars. David falls for Red, leaving his girlfriend in the lurch ... and you get the point. Everyone sleeps with everyone else, almost. Romantic high jinks aside, the film does raise some interesting issues about casual bisexuality, gay parenting and the fluidity of gender in this post-post-modern world.

Amour de Femme

Directed by Sylvie Verheyde

Picture This Entertainment

France

Young, hot and bored with marriage, motherhood and her osteopathy career, Jeanne (Helene Filleres) feels the siren call of the charismatic (and hot) dancer Marie (Raffaela Anderson). After lots (and lots) of tortured sexual tension, Jeanne finally gives in and realizes she's in love with Marie. When her husband finds out and threatens to take away her son, the film, sadly, ends. While *Un Amour de Femme* is sexy and beautifully shot, it falls short of addressing the prickly issues it almost courageously raises.

Eating Out

Directed by Q. Allan Brocka

Ariztical Entertainment Group

United States

Everyone knows the gay guys get all the hottest chicks. But those chicks are almost always (sigh) women more interested settling for the platonic love of their emotionally available, yet sexually unavailable, "boyfriends." In *Eating Out*, director Q. Allan Brocka campily asks the question: What would happen if a straight boy fell in love with a fag hag who would only go out with him if she thought he were gay. More broken compasses on the road to sexual orientation make for good, wholesome fun. Irksome little twinges of cinematic amateurism can't hide the fact that this is a brilliantly scripted romantic comedy with twists that Hollywood will soon be wishing it had made into *American Pie III*.

Proteus

Directed by John Greyson

Strand Releasing

Canada/South Africa

Probably one of the more difficult films in this year's festival, *Proteus* pays off in spades if you can stick with it. The story is this: A young South African Hottentot herder named Class Blank is accused of stealing cows that he claims originally belonged to his family and is sent to the Robben Island Penal Colony for 10 years of hard labor. Robben Island is home to a wide variety of Proteus flowers — a tenacious species of flora that metaphorically mirror the strange love that soon begins to bloom between Blank and Rijkhaart Jacobsz, a Dutch sailor serving time for sodomy. The affair is witnessed by Virgil Tyne, a botanist studying the Proteus flowers who develops a close relationship with Blank. When Tyne himself is accused of sodomy many years later, he returns to Robben Island and inadvertently exposes the relationship of Blank and Jacobsz, who must finally give a name to their love before a court of colony judges. Aside from a few strange anachronisms (including the video quality), the film is a powerful story of love and truth. Based on true events, it's hard to imagine the courage it must have taken to carry out such an affair in the 1700s.

Mango Kiss

Directed by Sascha Rice

Mango Me Productions

United States

While the acting in this farce about open relationships in the 1990s San Francisco dyke scene is lacking more than just a little bit, it's still a fun peek inside the convoluted emotional landscape of sexual role-playing in a community determined to defy staid heterosexual mores. Based on Sarah Brown's play, *Bermuda Triangles: The Non-Monogamy Experiment*, the film is lighthearted and decidedly hip.

Lily Festival

Directed by Sachi Hamano

Tantansha Co., Ltd.

Japan

The seldom touched upon subject of elderly sex is treated with grace and wit in *Lily Festival*. When Miyoshi, a dapper old man with more libido than a bottle of Viagra, moves into an apartment complex inhabited by nothing but gossipy older women, the elder-flirts and their cat claws come out flying. As each woman gradually realizes she's not "the only one," all are forced to see themselves for what they are and accept a far broader definition of their sexuality then they had ever imagined. A bit slow at times, but charming, beautifully directed and well acted all around.

continued on next page →

Film

Quantum-physical fitness training

What the Bleep Do We Know (Not Rated)
Lord of the Wind Films

What the Bleep Do We Know defies genre categorization as it uses documentary, narrative and experimental film technique to bring quantum physics to the people. Yes, that's right: Get ready for *Star Wars*-styled ticket lines 'cause they've finally (finally!) made a movie about quantum physics.

Marlee Maitlin in What the Bleep Do We Know.

It's not fun for the whole family, but at its best it flirts with the sort of intellectual calisthenics that almost cause your brain to spasm. There are many aspects to *What the Bleep Do We Know* that deserve slamming, but a lack of ambition is certainly not one of them. Co-directed by William Arntz, Betsy Chasse and Mark Vicente, it is a film about ideas, big ideas.

It's so big that a panel of 14 physicists and professional mystics are deployed to pontificate about the limits of human consciousness, the nature of God, and our infinite potential to create our realty. The questions are posed repeatedly and it's arguably because they're so heavy that one serving won't cut it. For instance, does our mental conditioning prevent us from seeing into another reality? Does this conditioning render us with feelings of helplessness to change our predicaments? What effects does our individual consciousness have on reality both past and present? (Never asked is why filmic representations of all things extrasensory *still* look like outtakes from the movie *Tron*!)

Oddly enough, none of these talking experts are identified until the end of the film, so one is never sure how to assess the merits of their vague pronouncements. Do they have a Ph.D.s from the University of Oregon, or are they operatives of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, a billionaire guru who believes that only a vanguard of elite meditators can bring world peace?

You may wind up asking, Who are these people and why should I listen to them? This is a diversion the filmmakers could have largely avoided with a few superimposed titles.

The film's scant storyline is used to illustrate the ideas proffered by the physicists/mystics. It concerns Amanda (Marlee Maitlin of *Children of a Lesser God* fame) a photographer whose life is in a state of spiritual crisis. À la *Alice in Wonderland*, Amanda's day-to-day doings offer a buffet of planes of consciousness, including everything from a lecture on wave theory by a basketball playing preteen to a touchy-feely bout of self-love and scrub in the bathtub.

When a plot is used solely as a vehicle for ideas, it often winds up feeling exactly like what it is: a pedagogical artifice. When Amanda is photographing a wedding and animated *Shrek*-ish critters start singing Robert Palmer's "Addicted to Love" to illustrate the mental addiction that is our sexuality, we yearn for a speedy return to the arsenal of talking heads. Many of the dramatic "scenes" in *What the Bleep* feel like those unwatchable historic re-enactments known to the History Channel and far too many "educational" films.

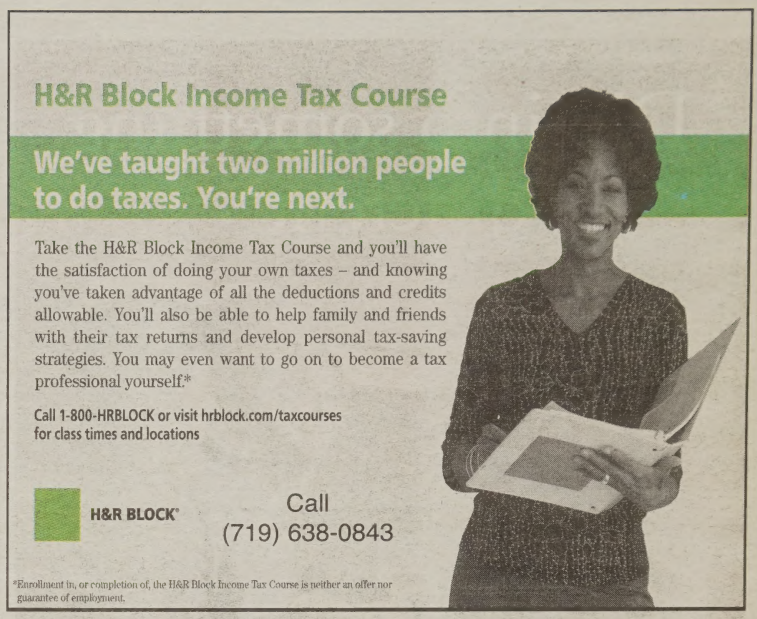
Even though its spiritual message is not sponsored by any particular organization, as it progresses the film's tone becomes increasingly preachy. What starts out as an earnest explication of difficult ideas, like whether matter is solid or how our brains conflate between memories and reality, devolves into New Age-like sermonizing about how "God is within us" and that there is no fixed right and wrong.

What The Bleep Do We Know is easier to dismiss than it is to even remotely understand. But no amount of genre fusion or originality of subject matter makes this movie good. At times it's rendered nearly unwatchable as Maitlin slowly, ponderously walks the streets of Portland pondering her infinite realities.

With so many realities, I'm delighted to imagine my potential to watch another movie …

— John Dicker

Kimball's Twin Peak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Mango Kiss, *showing Saturday at 7:15 p.m.*

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As with any political fight, much of the coming struggle will continue to be fought on the frontlines of culture: on the news and in books, music, TV shows and movies. For the GLBT community, film festivals have long been a primary way for queer filmmakers to circumvent the homophobia of Hollywood. Since 1976, the San Francisco International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival has played a seminal role in bringing visibility

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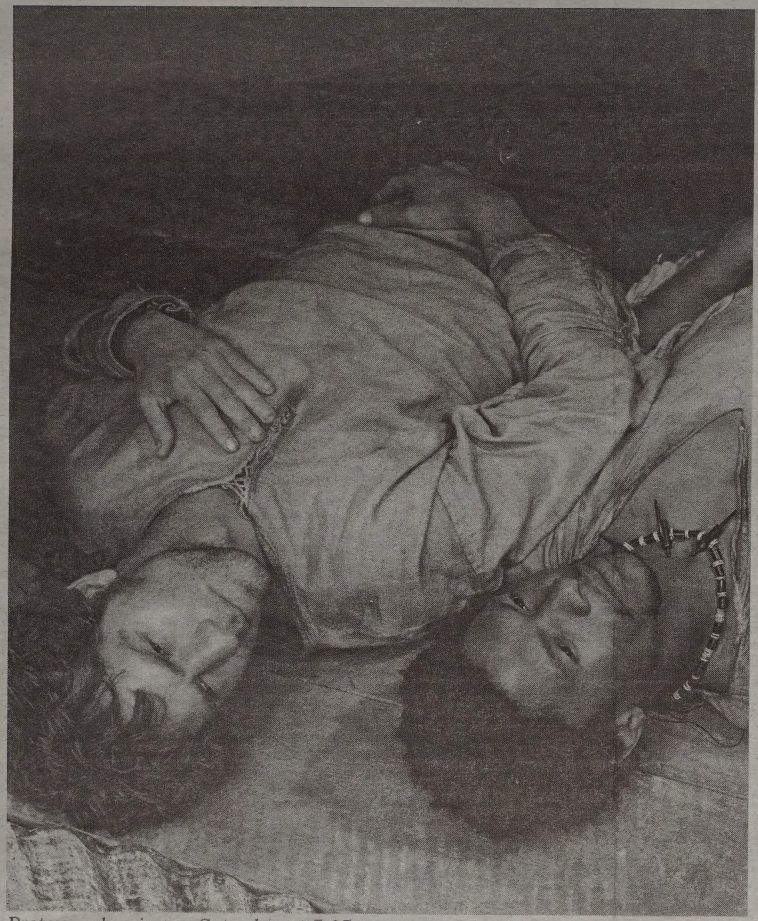

Proteus, *showing on Saturday at 5:15 p.m.*

→ *continued from pg. 46*

Callas Forever

Directed by Franco Zeffirelli

Capitol Films

Italy, England, France, Spain and Romania

My pick for the best all-around film of the festival is, without question, *Callas Forever*. You don't have to be an opera queen to appreciate the magnetism of the ultimate opera diva, Maria Callas, as she is perfectly inhabited by Fanny Ardant. Jeremy Irons plays Larry Kelly, Callas' estranged gay friend and manager who barges in on the flagging, pill-addled and reclusive diva during a visit to Paris in the late 1970s. Though her voice has long since passed its prime, Kelly convinces Callas to undertake one last career-defining project: a series of films in which she would act out her most famous opera rolls while her great earlier recordings would be overdubbed. As the production of *Carmen* proceeds, the Callas of yore re-emerges from her shadowy cocoon to give the performance of her lifetime. But the fact that her voice must be overdubbed haunts her and raises timeless questions about art and truth. Absolutely exquisite acting — you'll completely forget that Ardant isn't Callas!

Tying the Knot

Directed by Jim de Seve

IDP Distribution

United States

An important look at the issue of same-sex marriage, *Tying the Knot* shows two examples of imbroglios that can follow when a same-sex partner dies and the living partner doesn't have the legal entitlements afforded to heterosexual married couples. Experts also weigh in on the constantly changing definitions of marriage throughout history and draw parallels to the rhetoric of racism used by politicians opposed to interracial marriage and the rhetoric now being used by politicians to oppose same-sex marriage. Though de Seve leaves a few loose ends in the narrative and doesn't incorporate as many expert testimonials as he could have, overall it's well researched and compellingly presented.

Straight Jacket

Directed by Richard Day

Regent Entertainment

United States

In this witty, campy, comic look at the 1950s Hollywood closet, Guy Stone (Matt Letscher) plays a hunky gay actor à la Rock Hudson. Arranged marriage, dangerous liaisons and the inevitable choice of career or betrayal paint the ethos of the times from the other side of the closet door with 20/20 hindsight.

Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival

Fine Arts Center, 30 W. Dale St.

Friday, Sept. 17:

Catered opening reception at 6:30 p.m., welcome by Mary Lou Makepeace at 7:30 p.m., and opening night film, *Goldfish Memory*, at 8 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 18:

12:30 p.m.

Short: *F*Stop* by Roberta Degnore

Feature: *Amour de Femme*

2:30 p.m.

Short: *Seventy* by Q. Allan Brocka

Feature: *Eating Out*

5:15 p.m.

Short: *Straight in the Face* by Peter Demas

Feature: *Proteus*

7:15 p.m.

Short: *Little Black Boot* by Sascha Rice

Feature: *Mango Kiss*

Sunday, Sept. 19

Noon

Short: *You Fake* by Maureen Bradley

Feature: *Lily Festival*

2:30 p.m.

Short: *Annie Dearest: The Real Miracle Worker* by Donna Nudd and Diane Wilkins

Feature: *Callas Forever*

5 p.m.

Short: *One Wedding and a Revolution* by Debra Chasnoff

Feature: *Tying the Knot*

7 p.m.

Short: *TV Dream Homes: The Drawings of Mark Bennett* by Pamela Ezell

Feature: *Straight Jacket*

Tickets range from $75 for the festival pass to $10 for an individual feature.

For more, call 386-6843 or visit www.pplff.org.

MoviePicks

Films recommended by our reviewers are indicated by an *.

**Alaska: Spirit of the Wild (NR)*
Cinemark IMAX

Alien vs. Predator (PG-13)
When archaeologists discover a strange pyramid 2,000 feet below Antarctica's frozen surface, they bring humans into a battle between two extraterrestrial species — aliens and predators of previous sci-fi movie fame. — *Not reviewed*
Carmike 10, Chapel Hills 15, Cinemark 16, Tinseltown

Vincent (Tom Cruise). Vincent arrives in Los Angeles to take out five potential witnesses during a one-night spree. With money and a big gun, he forces taxi driver Max (Jamie Foxx) to be his unwilling chauffer. Mann masterfully sets up scene after scene, transporting the audience with the camera as if we too were riding along in the cab. Jamie Foxx, known best for his comedy roles, delivers a multi-faceted performance as a terrified, confused, intelligent and deeply humane protagonist. — *Kathryn Eastburn*
Chapel Hills 15, Cinemark 16, Tinseltown

The Cookout (PG-13)
Todd Anderson (Quran Pender) acquires $30 million when he's named the No. 1 NBA draft pick of the New Jersey Nets. He throws a cookout at his new house for his entire family, breaking the sacred neighborhood association's rule as his snooty neighbors look on.
Carmike 10, Tinseltown

Exorcist: The Beginning (R)
Exorcist: The Beginning makes no attempt to hide its ubiquitous violence and gore. In spite of the disturbing occasional decapitated head, the film builds suspense extraordinarily well. Its plot is built as an explanation of Father Merrin's comment about "an exorcism in Africa" in the 1972 horror original. Commendable cinematography repeatedly focuses on minute details, keeping the audience perpetually on edge, wondering when and how evil incarnate will be confronted. Stellan Skarsgard aptly plays Merrin, who has traveled to Kenya to join the excavation of

quently affecting remake. While the original was audacious, perversely funny, wicked and bold for its time, the new version is merely a competent drama. Liev Schreiber is Raymond Shaw, a decorated war hero from Operation Desert Storm and senator who has just received his party's vice-presidential nomination — with more than a little help from his domineering mother, played with aplomb by Meryl Streep. When Shaw's fomer commander, Major Marco (Denzel Washington) shows up asking questions about strange dreams he and others from their unit brought home from Kuwait, the paranoia begins. Ultimately Demme's remake stands on its own, but without the humor and satire of its predecessor. — *Kathryn Eastburn*
Chapel Hills 15, Cinemark 16, Tinseltown

**NASCAR 3-D (PG)*
Cinemark IMAX

Napoleon Dynamite (PG)
Napoleon Dynamite is a harmless spawn of Sundance that could have been an excellent character piece had it not overindulged in its own idiosyncratic sensibility. The film's protagonist is Napoleon Dynamite (Jon Heder), a teenager whose mouth is forever agape and whose disposition hops between extreme dopiness and standard-issue adolescent indignation. If there's anything of a plot, it occurs when the quixotic Napoleon befriends Pedro, a newly arrived Mexican, who makes a bid for class president. The two launch a campaign that, like so much in their hometown of Preston, Idaho, seems motivated by boredom as much as anything else. While *Napoleon Dynamite* is littered with hilarious bits and pieces, they add up to only a few hard laughs and not much else. — *John Dicker*
Cinemark 16

Open Water (R)
An American couple (Daniel Travis and Blanchard Ryan) are inadvertently left behind by their cruise boat to face the ordeal of survival in cold, shark-invested, open water. Based on true events. — *Not reviewed*

Vanity Fair (PG-13)
The daughter of an English artist and a French chorus girl, Becky Sharp (Reese Witherspoon) strives to move into the British aristocracy during the first quarter of the 19th century. Based on the novel by William Makepeace Thackeray.
Cinemark 16

The Village (PG-13)
The newest thriller from M. Night Shyamalan, director of *The Sixth Sense* and *Signs*. — *Not reviewed*
Tinseltown

Wicker Park (PG-13)
John Hartnett plays a man who fell in love with a woman who subsequently vanished without a trace. Two years later, after glimpsing her in a local bar, he begins a quest to uncover the truth about her disappearance.
Carmike 10, Chapel Hills 15, Cinemark 16, Tinseltown

Without a Paddle (PG-13)
Three guys take a canoe upriver into Oregon's wilderness, where everything that can go wrong does. — *Not reviewed*
Carmike 10, Chapel Hills 15, Cinemark 16, Tinseltown

Yu-Gi-Oh!: The Movie (PG)
As the card game *Duel Monsters!* sweeps across the nation, Yugi realizes the cards have unleashed a dark force into the world. — *Not reviewed*
Tinseltown

OPENING THIS WEEK

Cellular (PG-13)

Bringing the GLBT Community one-time screenings of great films, this weekend at the Colorado Springs Fine Art Center.

Goldfish Memory
Directed by Liz Gill, Ireland, 9/17, 8pm

Proteus
Dir. by John Greyson, Canada, Netherlands, S. Africa, 9-18, 5:15pm

Callas Forever
Dir. by Franco Zeffirelli, Italy, 9/19, 2:30pm

Amour de Femme
Dir. by Sylvie Verheyde, France, 9/18, 12:30pm

Mango Kiss
Dir. by Sascha Rice, USA, 9/18, 7:30pm

Tying the Knot
Dir. by Jim de Seve, USA, 9/19, 5pm

Eating Out
Dir. by Allan Brocka, USA, 9/18, 2:30pm

Lily Festival
Dir. by Sachi Hamano, Japan, 9/19, 12noon

Straight Jacket
Directed by Richard Day, USA, 9/19, 7pm

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Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center

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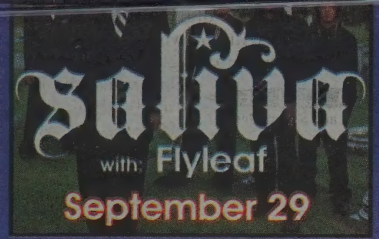
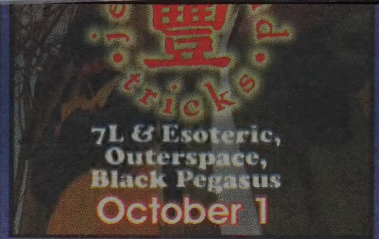
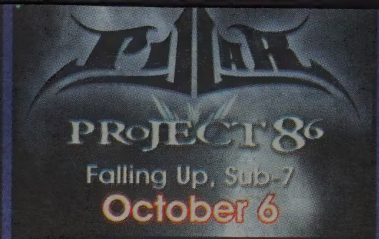
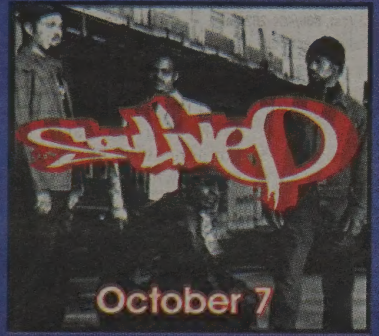
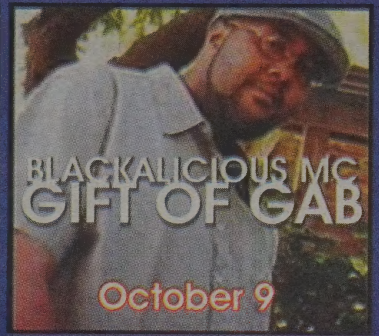
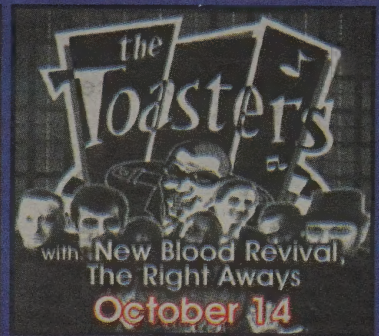












9/30 Tech N9ne
10/1 Jedi Mind Tricks, 7L & Esoteric, Outerspace, Black Pegasus
10/2 Lola Ray plus Leer 43
10/3 Dana Kurtz
10/6 Where do we go from here? Feat. Pillar, Project 86, Falling Up, Sub-7
10/7 Soulive
10/8 Reggae Night feat. Basil Reid, tba
10/9 Gift of Gab plus Accumen1, Working Class
10/12 Charlie Peacock
10/14 The Toasters, New Blood Revival, The Right Aways
10/20 Ming & FS - 2 for 1 taps!!!
10/23 The Decemberists, Dressy Bessy, Norfolk & Western
10/27 Chris Duarte Group
10/30 Ari Hest & Teitur plus Ana Nalick
10/31 Halloween Costume Hip Hop & R&B Party
11/1 Damien Jurado/Richard Buckner/ Dolorean
11/9 De La Soul plus Butta Verses
11/10 North Mississippi All Stars & Dirty Dozen Brass Band
11/12 Railroad Earth plus Local TBA
11/18 Cali Comm Tour
11/23 Sondre Lerche plus The Golden Republic
1/8 Rev Horton Heat plus Throw Rag

5th Annual Pikes Peak Lavendar Film Festival

September 17-19
at Fine Arts Center, www.pplff.org, 719-38-MOVIE
Award-winning LGBT Film Festival with films from around the world.

Lavender Film Festival, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, 30 W. Dale St. $10-$75. Screenings of films from around the world with LGBT characters. Sept. 17-19. Call 634-5583 or 38-MOVIE for more.
Photo from Proteus

Lavendar film fest hits screens Friday

The Fifth Annual Lavendar Film Festival opens Friday at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, 30 W. Dale St.

Opening night includes a reception at 6:30 p.m., a welcome from former mayor Mary Lou Makepeace at 7:30 p.m. and the Irish feature film "Goldfish Memory" at 8 p.m.

Passes may be purchased online at www.pplff.org or by calling 38-MOVIE (386-6843). Full festival passes are $75; half-passes are $50; four-film passes are $35; and opening night passes are $25.

Tickets for individual passes

SEE PREVIEWS, PAGE 18

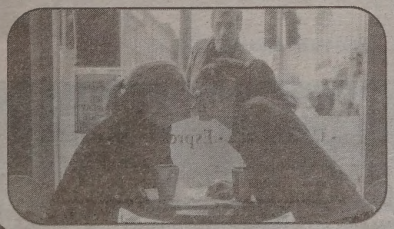
Previews

FROM PAGE 7

are $10.

A World Class LGBT film festival in Colorado Springs?
Go Figure! ...And for the fifth year, no less.

Opening Night • Friday, September 17th
Catered reception at 6:30
Opening remarks and welcome by Mary Lou Makepeace at 7:30
At 8:00, a Spanish short, *Circular Loves*, followed by the feature film, *Goldfish Memory*, an Irish romantic comedy.



Quickly paced, quick-witted, and completely engaging, this hilarious romantic comedy, takes every kind of love affair-unexpectedly expectant lesbian mothers, gay and straight men, those looking for a fling ending up in long term relationships, and good-about to be married girls having lesbian affairs-they're all here in this Irish charmer.
The title comes from the pick-up line used repeatedly by one character-a philandering has been poet-professor. Goldfish, he tells women have a three second memory-span much like humans when they fall in love. We forget the pain of the last break-up and go around the fishbowl all over again.

Fifth Annual Pikes Peak Lavender Film Festival
September 17th, 18th and 19th
Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center

Nine best GLBT feature films and nine best shorts of the year with three parties and more comedies than ever.

Individual tickets available after Labor Day at the FAC
or passes may be purchased at
Spice of Life • Wag'n'Wash • Toons • KRCC-FM
or online at www.pplff.org
or by calling 719-38-movie